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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6077
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4063
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2374

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Zuberg DATE 12/23/81
RDS [ ] XDS [ ]
DECLASSIFIED [✓] RELEASABLE [✓]
RELEASE DENIED [ ]
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

S E C R E T SAIGON 4784

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A) SAIGON 4778
B) SAIGON 4144

SUBJ: VIEWS ON TRAN VAN HUONG

1. MORNING SEPT 2, EMBOFF DISCUSED SITUATION WITH TRAN VAN HUONG. EMBOFF REFERRED TO RUMORS THAT VARIOUS FACTIONS ARE PLANNING TO LAUNCH STREET DEMONSTRATIONS IF THE THIEU-KY SLATE IS ELECTED AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT HUONG WILL USE HIS INFLUENCE WITH OTHER CANDIDATES TO PREVENT ANY SUCH RESORT TO ILLEGAL OR VIOLENT MEANS. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT

PAGE TWO RUMJIR 4784 S E C R E T
VIETNAM IS MOVING TOWARD THE RULE OF LAW UNDER THE CONSTITUTION AND AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT, AND IT WOULD BE A STEP

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BACKWARD IF THE LOSERS PROTESTED THE ELECTION BY ILLEGAL MEANS, ESPECIALLY SINCE VARIOUS LEGAL CHANNELS ARE AVAILABLE FOR COMPLAINTS.

2. HUONG RESPONDED FIRST BY REHEARSING CHARGES OF ELECTION FRAUD REPORTED REF A. HE PUT PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON CHARGE THAT GOVERNMENT DELIBERATELY HOLDING BACK ON DISTRIBUTION OF VOTER CARDS. HE ALSO WENT OVER THE NOW FAMILIAR GROUD OF HIS DECISION TO SACRIFICE HIS HONOR BY STAYING IN RIGGED ELECTION RACE (REF A).

3. HUONG THEN SAID THAT HE HAS COUNSELED VARIOUS GROUPS AGAINST DEMONSTRATIONS. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE YOUTH COMMITTEE TO BUILD DEMOCRACY CAME TO HIM EVENING SEPT 1 WITH PLANS FOR DEMONSTRATIONS BUT HE ADVISED THEM AGAINST SUCH ACTIONS. AMONG THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES ONLY SUU, HA THUC KY, TRUONG DINH DZU AND HUONG HAVE ENOUGH SUPPORT TO GENERATE DEMONSTRATIONS. HUONG FEARS THAT HA THUC KY MAY DECIDE TO LAUNCH POST-ELECTION DEMONSTRATIONS.

4. HUONG WENT ON TO SAY THAT ON SEPT 1 HA THUC KY

HAD SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT THEY BOTH WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE. EMBOFF ASKED WHO HA THUC KY WANTED TO SUPPORT BY SUCH A MOVE, TO WHICH HUONG REPLIED THAT HA THUC KY MERELY WANTED TO WITHDRAW. WHEN EMBOFF COMMENTED THAT SUCH A WITHDRAWAL WOULD IMPOVE PHAN KHAC SUU'S CHANCES, HUONG AGREED AND SAID THAT THIS WAS ONE OF THE REASONS HE TURNED DOWN THE SUGGESTION. HUONG SAID THAT HE HAS GREAT RESPECT FOR SUU, BUT SPEAKING VERY CONFIDENTIALLY, HE THINKS SUU WOULD BE A TERRIBLE PRESIDENT. SUU WAS IMPRISONED AND BEATEN DURING HIS LONG YEARS AS A REVOLUTIONARY LEADER, AND HE IS NOW FUZZY IN THE HEAD. SUU IS SUBJECT TO INFLUENCE FROM ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE, PERHAPS EVEN THE COMMUNISTS.

5. HUONG AGAIN REPEATED HIS BELIEF THAT PRIME MINISTER KY HAS MADE A DEAL WITH PHAN KHAC SUU UNDER WHICH SUU WILL NAME KY AS PRIME MINISTER IN RETURN FOR KY'S SECRET BACKING IN

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THE ELECTION. THIS IS ONLY ONE OF KY'S MANY PLOTS. ANOTHER KY PLOT IS TO PACK THE FUTURELEGISLATURE WITH HIS SUPPORTERS SO AS TO BE ABLE TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION. IF THIEU WINS AND KY CONTROLS THE LEGISLATURE, KY WILL CHANGE THE CONSTI-TUTION SO AS TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO BE PRIME MIN-

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6. STILL SPEAKING OF KY'S ALLEGED MACHINATIONS, HUONG SAID THAT KY HAS NOT ACTED AGINST THE AN QUANG MILITANT BUDDHISTS BECAUSE HE INTENDS TO USE THEM AGAINST HUONG IF HUONG SHOULD BE ELECTED. HUONG THEN SAID FLATELY THAT HIS IS URE THICH TRI QUANG IS A COMMUNIST. TRI QUANG AND THE AN QUANG MILITANTS ARE BACKING SUU BECAUSE THEY THINK HIS ELECTION WOULD HELP THE COMMUNIST CAUSE. THE AN QUANG MILITANTS PUT THE WORD OUT PUBLICLY THAT THEY WERE BACKING HUONG WITH THE INTENTION OF MAKING THE CATH-OLICS SUSPICOUS OF HUONG; AT THE SAME TIME THEY SECRETLY ORDERED THEIR FOLLOWERS TO SUPPORT SUU.

7. COMMENT: (A) IF THIEU IS ELECTED, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT HUONG WILL CONTRIBUTE TO ANY POST ELECTION DEMONSTRATIONS.

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HUONG SEEMS SINCERE IN HIS OFT STATED ADHERENCE TO THE RULE OF LAW, AND WE BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT HE WOULD ABANDON THIS PRINCIPLE TO BACK STREET DEMONSTRATIONS NOW. MOREOVER MANY OF HIS SUPPORTERS IN THE HRS (WE HEAR OVER 30) HAVE FILED FOR THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTION. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE HRS WILL NOT WANT TO UPSET THE PROCESS LEADING TOWARD IN-

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STALLATION OF A NEW ELECTED GOVERNMENT AND THAT THEIR INTEREST MAY BE IN PLAYING THE OPPOSITION IN THE LEGISLATURE RATHER THAN IN THE STREETS. IF THE TRUONG SENATE SLATE IS ELECTED, THIS TENDENCY SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED.

(B) DESITE (A) ABOVE, HUONG AND COMPANY WILL LIKELY PROTEST VIGOUROUSLY IF THIEU-KY WIN, AND THEY MAY JOIN IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET THE ASSEMBLY TO INVALIDATE THE ELECTION.

(C) EMOBFF FOUND HA THUC KY VERY TIRED AND DEPRESSED DURING A CALL ON HIM SEPT 1. THIS MAY ACCOUNT FOR HUONG'S STATEMENT THAT HA THUC KY ON THE SAME DAY SUGGESTED THEY BOTH WITHDRAW. HA THUC KY MAY FEAR THAT HE HAS GONE TOO FAR IN HIS PUBLIC ATTACKS ON THE REGIME AND THEREBY ENDANGERED THE POSITIONS OF HIS PARTY MEMBERS IN THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE. HE MAY ALSO NOW FEEL THAT HIS LIKELY DEFEAT IN THE ELECTION IS

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A THREAT TO HIS PARTY'S CONTINUED STRENGTH AND GROWTH.

(D) HUONG'S REMARKS ABOUT PRIME MINISTER KY HAVE GROWN STEADILY MORE VIRULENT AS THE CAMPAIGN HAS PROCEEDED. HE NOW SEEMS TO HAVE A VIRTUAL FIXATION ABOUT KY'S ALLEGED PLOTS, AND HIS OFTEN WILD CHARGES SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TOO SERIOUSLY.

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6077
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4063
CINCPAC
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BUNKER

NOTE: MESSAGE AS RECEIVED.
CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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